

QUEEN OF HOARDS

an original screenplay by

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FADE IN:

EXT. FARMHOUSE - AFTERNOON

A beat-up pickup truck sits outside a rambling two-story farmhouse on a quiet rural road. Prominent on its back window is an Army star.

YUSEF (O.S.)
You are such a raging...

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

YUSEF (30s - a swarthy, clean-cut man) sits behind the wheel. Rumpled blazer and tie. Military haircut. Sturdy. He holds an iPhone to his ear.

YUSEF
Jesus, Audrey - would you listen for
once in your God damned life?

Yusef pulls a maroon envelope from the blazer's pocket. Pours a shiny key from it into his hand.

YUSEF
Yes, he gave me the house, the
property - everything. 30 acres of
woods and fields... who else would
he give the fucking thing to?

His gaze lingers on the farmhouse.

YUSEF
I'm in front of it now. It's cute.
Richard would have had a cute house.
No, the will had the usual stuff...

Yusef glances around outside as he talks.

YUSEF
... Except this weird half million
bucks set aside. The damn lawyer
called it a "special dividend" for
something... what..?

He pulls a semi-automatic pistol from the center console.
Checks the clip.

YUSEF

Nice. Just what I'd expect a cold bitch like you to say.

Yusef ends the call and throws the phone onto the passenger seat. It bounces into the footwell.

He wrestles off his tie and yanks open his shirt collar. Leans down to fetch the iPhone. A small copper medallion hanging from his neck glints in the sunlight.

Yusef climbs from the pickup. Pockets the iPhone and maroon envelope. Jams the gun and a box of ammo into his blazer. And heads toward the farmhouse.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The farmhouse sits on a large wooded lot. Detached garage. A church steeple peeks above the trees behind it.

Yusef walks behind the house. He notes a piece of yellow caution tape tangled in a shrub by the garage. A festival of yard gnomes jam the patio.

He unlocks the kitchen door with some anticipation.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Yusef clicks on the light.

A hoard of epic proportions faces him. Storage containers and bric-a-brac cram the room. Vintage appliances are barely accessible.

YUSEF

Well, Richard - nobody would find a thing in here.

Yusef tosses the key into a vintage ashtray on a tidy cafe table. Examines the room. A photo hanging above the table catches his eye. He examines it.

YUSEF

Or should I say, Olivia.

CLOSE ON a beauty shot of an elegant old drag queen.

Unfazed by the hoard, he drapes his blazer over one of two empty chairs and wedges the pistol into a cabinet. He squeezes through a narrow opening into the:

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Yusef stands in a small open area beside a dining table. Stacks of crystal, china and figurines tower to the chandelier. Crates and boxes jam the remaining space.

Yusef runs a finger along the table's edge – not a speck of dust. A tight path leads into:

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Floor-to-ceiling storage containers. Dressed mannequins and neat piles of literature block the windows and doors. Intricately hung artwork fills the walls like puzzle pieces.

A portrait of a soldier draws Yusef's attention – an unmistakable likeness of himself.

Mannequins and boxes pack the foyer. Yusef shoves enough aside to access the stairs and climbs to the second floor.

INT. STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

Two chairs, an easel, paint supplies and canvases form an artistic oasis – too perfect a refuge from the hoard. Paintings cover the walls.

Yusef steps into the oasis. Admires a painting of a muscular man on the easel. He picks it up. Gets wet paint on his shirt.

A maroon envelope falls from behind it.

Yusef picks up the envelope. Recognizes the gold handwriting on the front, but the name...

YUSEF

Who the hell is Pauli?

Baffled, he replaces the envelope and sets the painting back on the easel. He sees another painting of a young boy.

OLIVIA née RICHARD (50s, a statuesque woman) appears in full drag, a figment in Yusef's mind's eye. She sits at the easel.

OLIVIA

That was a grand day, wasn't it? You were a lovely subject. Didn't we go to the zoo after?

Yusef smiles at the memory.

OLIVIA

Now fuck the sentiment – you have
work to do.

Then, she's gone. Yusef searches a file cabinet. He finds
the folder he wants: house files, including the deed.

Another folder rests behind it, labeled: SUBJECTS. Yusef
pulls it out and opens it.

CLOSE ON the contents: nude photographs of Richard's subjects.

Yusef hears someone outside. He quickly replaces the folders
where he found them.

INT. KITCHEN - THAT DAY

LEONA (50s, a flamboyant, rotund but demurely-dressed drag
queen) bursts in like a tornado, a maroon envelope in hand.

Handsome PAULI (20s, an athletic latino stud in a black shirt
with an Olive Garden pin on the chest) trails behind her.

Leona takes in the room with dramatic disgust.

LEONA

A minimalist, my ass.

PAULI

Was she a collector?

LEONA

She was a liar and a tramp.

Yusef squeezes into the room, surprising Leona. Pauli gives
Yusef a once-over and likes what he sees.

YUSEF

Uncle Sebastian?

LEONA

Aunt Leona, darling. Get the nom de
drag right. And the pronouns --

YUSEF

-- What the hell are you doing here?

Leona waves a maroon envelope in Yusef's face.

LEONA

An invitation from my ex, from the grave no less. Apparently, dear Olivia left some life-changing something for me in this shit-hole.

Yusef looks between Leona and Pauli.

YUSEF

(irritated)

Fuck.

LEONA

I love you, too. How's your mother?

YUSEF

She'd like a visit from her brother – or sister, or whoever you decide to be that day.

LEONA

Don't be catty. Olivia would have wanted me this way.

YUSEF

Mom misses you --

LEONA

-- Is this house for sale? With this end of town urbanizing and all --

YUSEF

I just got possession --

LEONA

-- And are you going back to Iraq or rejoining the real world?

YUSEF

No, the house isn't for sale.

LEONA

I never wanted you involved in that half-baked boondoggle over there – that was Olivia's idea. Or maybe you enjoy killing people?

The comment hangs between them. Pauli extends a hand.

PAULI

Yo, I'm Pauli, Ms. Leona's companion.

Yusef shakes Pauli's hand firmly but coldly.

YUSEF

They transferred me to the
Quartermaster Corps against my wishes.
I want to be on the front with my
men. My people --

LEONA

(derisively)
-- Your people.

PAULI

Is that paint? Lemme help with that.

Pauli finds dish soap and a brush beneath the sink and deftly attacks the paint on Yusef's shirt. Yusef tries to pull away.

PAULI

Just hold still. I don't bite.

Pauli's raw magnetism charms Yusef. The act is at once aggressive and tenderly intimate.

PAULI

That copper piece on your necklace
mean somethin'?

YUSEF

It's arabic. The letter "N".

PAULI

Nice. It fits you good.

Leona loudly searches cabinets.

PAULI

Leona, you should wait for the others.

YUSEF

What others?

EXT. BACKYARD - LATER

A line of yard gnomes sits on a picnic table. An empty field stretches behind it. With quick shots, three gnomes disappear in a blast of pottery shards.

On the patio, Yusef lowers his pistol. He reloads.

BUTCH (O.S.)
Hey, buddy – hold up!

BUTCH (early 40s, a burly Catholic priest in traditional collar, black shirt and black leather coat) approaches through the backyard. An earnest man with impish eyes.

He has a brown bag in one hand and waves the other.

BUTCH
I surrender.

Yusef motions Butch forward and studies him as he approaches.

YUSEF
You make a dramatic entrance, Father.

BUTCH
There's a gap in the fence. It's shorter. You're Yusef, right? Richard's nephew?

YUSEF
His nephew by – partnership, I guess. Richard and my uncle --

BUTCH
-- Were life partners for 12 years. Richard said he kept up with you after they split. He spoke very highly of you.

YUSEF
Did he?

BUTCH
He never said you were a Nazarene.

Yusef stuffs the copper medallion necklace beneath his shirt.

BUTCH
Some folks in Iraq would take issue with that.

Yusef considers Butch as he reloads the gun.

YUSEF
I assume you preside at that church?

BUTCH

I do - and I left my manners in the rectory! Father Butch, pastor at St. Matthew's there, and a paper pusher at the diocesan offices.

Butch shakes Yusef's hand. He is warm. Comforting.

BUTCH

I'm so sorry for your loss.

YUSEF

Butch is an odd name for a priest.

BUTCH

It's a nickname from my time as an Army chaplain. A couple of lads labeled me and it stuck. Mind if I give that a go?

Yusef checks the safety and hands Butch the gun. Butch knows his way around a weapon, but misses every gnome.

Butch engages the safety. Returns the gun to Yusef.

BUTCH

I'm more a lover than a fighter. Weren't you a sharpshooter before your transfer to Quartermaster Corps --

YUSEF

-- Why are you here, Father?

Butch shows Yusef a maroon envelope.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Yusef and Butch enter the now crowded kitchen. Yusef hides the gun as Butch introduces himself to Leona and Pauli.

BUTCH

Wow, it's tight in here.

He claps Pauli on the back, jovial and unrestrained.

BUTCH

The new owner will need some muscle to clear it out.

YUSEF

I'm the new owner. I guess we're neighbors.

Butch pulls whiskey from the brown bag. Hands it to Pauli. Pauli checks out the bottle – and Butch.

LEONA

I didn't realize this was BYOB.

BUTCH

Just being charitable. Sometimes mourning requires a wee dram --

LEONA

-- Are you truly celibate – daddy – or just playing at priestly devotion?

BUTCH

I'd never suggest you were playing dress-up, Ms. Leona. Are you?
(meeting Pauli's gaze)
No, I'm every inch a priest.

Leona exchanges a skeptical look with Yusef.

BUTCH

So Richard owned this house and all this stuff, eh? Amazing. I visited him at his studio downtown.

YUSEF

You don't strike me as a collector.

BUTCH

More an enthusiast. It was very minimalist. Not like this --

YUSEF

-- How did you meet Richard?

BUTCH

At church. Where else?

XENIA (50s, an elegant latina in a practical suit) enters. Poised and regal in the best of times, she bangs the door into Pauli as she rushes in.

XENIA

I am so sorry! Are you okay?

PAULI

Hey, no worries.

She squeezes into the space. Takes in the room.

XENIA

So crowded! Reminds me of my town
hall meetings – and look at this
place! Did he live here – oh, Yusef...

She smothers Yusef in a hug. He accepts it coolly.

XENIA

Let your godmother see you. Are you
okay? I worry so about you in Iraq,
doing the good work of this country.

LEONA

(disgusted)
Oh my God...

XENIA

How is that saint, Audrey – keeping
the home fires burning as you fight
for our freedom?

YUSEF

Audrey is Audrey.

She shakes Pauli's hand perfunctorily. Butch shakes her hand
with gusto.

BUTCH

Father Butch. St. Matthew's church.
A pleasure to meet the Honorable
Xenia Jackson.

XENIA

My face is all over town – those ads
for Congress. Everyone seems to know
me. Did you know Richard very well?

BUTCH

Very. Can I buy you a drink?

Butch opens the whiskey. Pauli deftly provides five juice
glasses without a search.

XENIA

No, thank you. I'm sober ten years.